

1. POPULATION and DEMOGRAPHICS

INTRODUCTION

An understanding of population trends is essential to planning for Bucksport's future. Most of the chapters and the recommendations of this plan are dependent upon or strongly influenced by the size and composition of Bucksport's current and projected population. The format of this chapter (and all others) follows the State Comprehensive Plan Criteria Rule as amended in August 2011.

OVERVIEW

Since World War II, Bucksport's population has grown steadily from about 3,000 souls to almost 5,000 today according to US Census figures for year-round population. The most recent decades, however, have shown a slowdown in growth rate from double-digit percentage increases in the 1970's and 1980's to less than 1% over the last ten years. Furthermore, the Maine State Office of Policy and Management projects that Bucksport's population numbers are likely to decline over the next ten years. This trend could be overcome if there were more incentives for people to move to the area and birthrates begin to climb. There is much more to the story...

HIGHLIGHTS

- ★ Bucksport gains relatively few additional residents for the summer season.
- ★ Bucksport could lose as much as a quarter of its total population by 2030.
- ★ Bucksport's average age is rising, but it is still lower than Hancock County's.
- ★ Bucksport's median income is lower than most neighboring towns, but...
- ★ Bucksport's median income is higher than Hancock County's or Maine's.

MILL CLOSURE EFFECTS

The permanent shut down of the Verso Paper Mill in 2014 was a watershed moment in the town's history. Many lives were disrupted and some families found the need to relocate for employment elsewhere. The statistics and projections in this chapter pre-date, and do not anticipate this major tremor.

The aftermath of the mill's closure will become evident in the coming years. Some predict that Bucksport without a mill will be more attractive for new commercial and residential growth, while others predict that the town may never fully recover from the loss of this major employer. In any event, it is important that we focus on what attracts people and businesses to town and what influences them to stay, and take appropriate steps to protect those benefits.



ANALYSES

Population

Historic population trends and future projections are shown in Table 1.1. The 2003 plan projected a year-round population of 5,153 for 2010. The reported US Census population for 2010 was 4,924, which is about 96 percent of the projected population. The town gained sixteen people (a growth rate of about 0.3 percent) between 2000 and 2010. This is a slower increase than the 1.7 percent rate between 1990 and 2000 and the 11 percent rate between 1980 and 1990. The state population projections for Bucksport show a 9.1 percent decrease between 2010 and 2020 and a decrease of about 24 percent between 2020 and 2030. Projections for Hancock County show a decrease of 4.8 percent between 2010 and 2020 and 5.9 percent between 2020 and 2030. The majority of Hancock County towns are projected to lose population. The projections are derived in part from the recent historical growth of the town's share of the county's population. They should be reviewed periodically since they are subject to error.

Is the rate of population change expected to continue as in the past, or to slow down or speed up? What are the implications of this change?

The median age is increasing. The median age in Bucksport was 32.1 years in 1990 compared to 38.3 in 2000, and 38.9 in 2010. The median age for the county increased from 35.8 in 1990 to 40.7 in 2000 and 45.2 in 2010. Bucksport has a lower median age than the county.

Table 1.1 Bucksport Historical Year-Round Population Change 1940-2010 and Projections through 2030.		
Year	Population	Ten-year change (%)
1940	2,927	-
1950	3,120	6.6%
1960	3,466	11.0%
1970	3,756	8.3%
1980	4,345	15.7%
1990	4,825	11.0%
2000	4,908	1.7%
2010	4,924	0.3%
2020 (projected)	4,469	-9.1%
2030 (projected)	3,398	-23.9%
SOURCE: U.S. Census 2000, 2003 Comprehensive Plan, and State Office of Policy and Management for projections		

The change by age groups between 2000 and 2010 is shown in Table 1.2. There was a 22 percent decrease in the age 5-17 group and a 14 percent decrease in those between 18 and 44. The first group represents most of those of K-12-grade school age and the second those of prime child-bearing age.

The largest increase (34 percent) was those between 45 and 64 years. This group accounted for about one-quarter of the population in 2000 and about one-third of the total in 2010. It accounted for the largest percentage component of the year-round population in 2010. This is in contrast to 2000 when the 18-44 group had the greatest share.

Table 1.2				
Change in Age Groups in Bucksport, 2000-2010				
Population	2000	2010	Change	Percent Change
Under 5 years	272	275	3	1%
Percent of total	5.5%	5.6%		
5 to 17 years	957	742	(215)	-22%
Percent of total	19.4%	15.1%		
18 to 44 years	1,803	1,543	(260)	-14%
Percent of total	36.7%	31.3%		
45 to 64 years	1,211	1,628	417	34%
Percent of total	24.6%	33.1%		
65 and over	665	736	71	11%
Percent of total	13.5%	14.9%		
Total	4,908	4,924	16	0.3%
SOURCE: U.S. Census				

Table 1.3 shows the county-wide shift in age groups. The town had a faster rate of decrease in the 5-17 and 18-44 groups than the county. There was an 18 percent decrease for the county. The county had a higher rate of increase (20 percent) in those aged 65 and older than did the town (11 percent).

The 5-17 group accounted for a 15.1 percent of the total population in Bucksport in 2010. This is slightly larger than the 14.2 percent share for the entire county. Similarly, the 18-44 group accounted for 31.3 percent of the town's population compared to a 29.6 percent share for the county.

Table 1.3
Change in Age Groups in Hancock County, 2000-2010

Population	2000	2010	Change	Percent Change
Under 5 years	2,516	2,603	87	3%
Percent of total	4.8%	4.7%		
5 to 17 years	9,027	7,374	(1,653)	-18%
Percent of total	17.4%	14.2%		
18 to 44 years	18,074	16,154	(1,920)	-11%
Percent of total	34.8%	29.6%		
45 to 64 years	13,889	18,350	4,461	32%
Percent of total	26.8%	33.7%		
65 and over	8,285	9,937	1,652	20%
Percent of total	15.9%	18.2%		
Total	51,791	54,418	2,627	5%
SOURCE: U.S. Census				

The 2003 plan noted that Bucksport had a higher growth rate than most nearby service centers with the exception of the tourist-oriented communities of Blue Hill, Ellsworth and Bar Harbor. Between 2000 and 2010, the town had a lower growth rate than all these towns/cities with the exception of Winter Harbor, which had a Navy base closure.

Table 1.4
Comparison of Year-Round Population Growth Rates for Bucksport and Other Service Centers

Municipality	2000	2010	Percent Change
Bucksport	4,908	4,924	0.32%
Bar Harbor	4,820	5,194	7.7%
Blue Hill	2,390	2,649	10.8%
Ellsworth	6,456	7,555	17.0%
Bangor	31,473	33,039	4.9%
Belfast	6,381	6,668	4.5%
Winter Harbor	988	498	-49%
SOURCE: U.S. Census			

Table 1.5 compares population change in Bucksport to other mill towns outside of an easy commute to metropolitan areas. With the exception of Madison, these towns all lost population. The town is faring better than these mill towns.

Table 1.5 Comparison of Year-Round Population Change for Bucksport and Other Mill Towns			
Municipality	2000	2010	Percent Change
Bucksport	4,908	4,924	0.32%
East Millinocket	1,823	1,722	-5.5%
Madawaska	4,530	4,027	-11.1%
Madison	4,524	4,854	7.3%
Millinocket	5,191	4,502	-13.2%
Lincoln	5,221	5,085	-1.7%
Rumford	6,464	5,832	-9.8%
SOURCE: U.S. Census			

Education

Socio-economic statistics prepared by the Maine Office of Policy and Management show contrasts between Bucksport and Hancock County. For example, 16.23 percent of Bucksport residents aged 25 years and older in 2000 had a bachelor's degree compared to a 27.13 percent rate for the county. The rate for Bucksport had increased by seven percentage points to 23.3 percent by 2010, while the county's rate was 30.10 percent, an increase just under three percentage points. Educational attainment increased at a faster rate in Bucksport than the county.

Income

American Community Survey (ACS) data show that 17.9 percent of Bucksport residents in 2010 were below the poverty level, compared to 11.5 percent of the county. This rate is also higher than the 15.7 percent and 14.6 percent respective rates for adjoining Penobscot and Waldo Counties. Census data indicate that Bucksport had a 10.8 percent poverty rate for individuals in 2000 compared to a 10.2 percent rate for the county. In 1990 the town also had a 10.8 percent poverty rate. These data indicate that the town is experiencing an increasing poverty rate. It should be noted that the 2010 ACS data are based on a sample and have a margin of error while the 2000 data are based on a more thorough count.

There are also contrasts in median household income (MHI). The 2000 U.S. Census listed the MHI in Bucksport as \$34,812 compared to \$35,811 for Hancock County. For 2011, the data report that the town's MHI was \$50,261 compared to \$47,421 for the county. Penobscot and Waldo counties had MHI's of \$45,658 and \$41,312 respectively.

Table 1.6 compares the breakdown of income by households. About 8.1 percent of households have incomes under \$10,000 compared to a 6.3 percent rate for the county. The most common income range (30 percent) in Bucksport is between \$50,000 and \$74,999. This group accounts for 20.7 percent of all households in the county. The next largest income group in Bucksport (15.4 percent) is the \$15,000 to \$24,999 bracket. This group accounts for 12.4 percent of county households. There are fewer households in Bucksport (9.1 percent) with incomes over \$100,000 than there are in the county (15.1 percent). Bucksport has more households at the lowest income ranges and fewer at the top income than does the county as a whole.

Table 1.6				
Breakdown of Annual Household Income by Group				
Income Group	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
	Bucksport		Hancock County	
Less than \$10,000	164	8.1%	1,464	6.3%
\$10,000 - \$14,000	126	6.2%	1,525	6.5%
\$15,000-\$24,999	312	15.4%	2,970	12.7%
\$25,000-\$34,999	220	10.9%	2,713	11.6%
\$35,000-\$49,000	204	10.1%	3,496	15.1%
\$50,000-\$74,999	608	30.0%	4,814	20.7%
\$75,000-\$99,999	207	10.2%	2,787	12.0%
\$100,000-\$149,999	163	8.0%	2,360	10.1%
\$150,000-\$199,000	17	0.8%	704	3.0%
\$200,000 or more	6	0.3%	467	2.0%
Total Households	2,027	100%	23,300	100%
SOURCE: American Community Survey, 2006-2010 estimates				

Household Size and Composition

Bucksport has a higher rate of female-headed households and non-institutionalized people with a disability than Hancock County. ACS figures for the 2008-2012 period show that 11.9 percent of households in Bucksport were female-headed compared to 8.3 percent of those in the county. The town's disability rate was 16.9 percent while the county had a 15.8 percent rate.

The town and the county have experienced a decrease in household size. The 2003 plan had projected an average of 2.35 persons per household by 2010. As shown on

Table 1.7, the actual size was 2.30. Household sizes have been consistently above the county average.

Table 1.7					
Change in Household Size, Bucksport and Hancock County					
		1980	1990	2000	2010
Bucksport	# persons per household	2.74	2.65	2.38	2.30
Hancock County	# persons per household	2.62	2.48	2.31	2.20
Source: U.S. Census					

This is probably due to the town's lower median age, which means there are more families as opposed to empty nesters. American Community Survey data (see Table 1.8) that about one-third of households in Bucksport have children under the age of 18. This compares to about one-quarter of households county-wide. This is also a higher rate than Waldo and Penobscot counties.

Table 1.8		
Households with children under 18		
	Total households	Percent with children under 18
Bucksport	2,027	33.3%
Hancock County	23,300	24.9%
Penobscot County	62,282	28.6%
Waldo County	16,136	28.6%
SOURCE: American Community Survey 2006-2010 estimates		

Racially, the town was 97.2 percent white in 2010 compared 98.1 percent in 2000. Hancock County shifted from 97.6 percent white in 2000 to a 97.1 percent rate in 2010. There are no concentrations of minority populations. Racial information is important in filing many federal grant funding applications.

The 2003 plan reported that about two-thirds of the second homes in town were owned by year-round residents. Second homes are discussed in the Housing chapter. The town experiences greater traffic during the tourist season. This brings more day visitors into town. Traffic patterns are discussed in the Transportation chapter. Bucksport is a service center community that has influx of commuters. Employment trends are discussed in the Economy chapter.

Does your community have a significant seasonal population? Is the nature of that population changing? What is the community's dependence on seasonal visitors? If your community is a service center or has a major employer, are additional efforts required to serve a daytime population that is larger than its resident population?

CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

Several trends are indicated by the data. First, the town is projected to lose population. This projection does not need to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Rather, it means the town needs to continue with its economic development activities to create and retain jobs. It may also want to promote itself as a retirement community and take other measures to promote in-migration. A second trend is a high poverty rate. Here again, job creation and job training programs may be needed. Third, the aging of the town's population may mean shifts in services for its population. There is likely to be increased demand for services for the elderly. For example, there may be greater opportunities for investments in assisted living facilities.



Gardiner Commons on Elm Street, a school building conversion completed in 2009, may be part of a trend toward more elderly housing in Bucksport.